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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Yingjian Chen et al :
Application No. 10/788,765 : DECISION ON PETITION
Filed: February 27, 2004 :
Attorney Docket No. R1850 :
:

This is a decision on the petition under the unintentional provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b), filed February 6, 2007, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The application became abandoned for failure to reply in a timely manner to the Notice to File Missing Parts of Nonprovisional Application (Notice), mailed May 19, 2004, which required the submission of an executed oath or declaration and a \$130 surcharge fee for its late filing. The Notice set a period for reply of two (2) months from the mail date of the Notice. In reply, on November 5, 2004, the Office received a declaration executed by all the inventors, except for inventor Mohamad T. Krounbi, along with a four (4) month extension of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). On November 16, 2004, the Office mailed a Notice of Incomplete Reply stating that the signature of inventor Mohamad T. Krounbi was missing and that the period for reply remained as set in the Notice of May 19, 2004. No reply was received. Therefore, the application became abandoned on November 20, 2004. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on March 27, 2006.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply, unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m); (3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required by 37 CFR 1.137(d). Where there is a question as to whether either the abandonment or the delay in filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137 was unintentional, the Director may require additional information. See MPEP 711.03(c) (II) (C). The instant petition lacks items (1) and (3).

Turning first to item (1), the petition was accompanied by a declaration executed by inventor Mohamad T. Krounbi only. While the Office did receive a declaration executed by all the other named inventors on November 4, 2004, the declaration submitted with the petition is unacceptable as it fails to comply with 37 CFR 1.63(a) (2) in that the declaration does not list all the named inventors. Petitioner's attention is directed to MPEP Section 602, which states: "Where joint inventors execute separate oaths or declarations, each oath or declaration should make reference to the fact that the affiant is a joint inventor together with the other joint inventors indicating them by name." Accordingly, an executed declaration which lists all the inventors is required to satisfy item (1) above.

Lastly, as to item (3) above, as this application has been abandoned for an inordinate period of time, there are three periods to be considered during the evaluation of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b):

- (1) the delay in reply that originally resulted in the abandonment;
- (2) the delay in filing an initial petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the application; and
- (3) the delay in filing a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the application.

Currently, the delay has not been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional for periods (1) and (2).

As to Period (1):

The patent statute at 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Director to revive an "unintentionally abandoned application." The legislative history of Public Law 97-247 reveals that the purpose of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) is to permit the Office to have more discretion than in 35 U.S.C. §§ 133 or 151 to revive abandoned applications in appropriate circumstances, but places a limit on this discretion, stating that "[u]nder this section a petition accompanied by either a fee of \$500 or a fee of \$50 would not be granted where the abandonment or the failure to pay the fee for issuing the patent was intentional as opposed to being unintentional or unavoidable." [emphasis added]. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 6-7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 770-71. The revival of an intentionally abandoned application is antithetical to the meaning and intent of the statute and regulation.

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Commissioner to accept a petition "for the revival of an unintentionally abandoned application for a patent." As amended December 1, 1997, 37 CFR 1.137(b)(3) provides that a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by a statement that the delay was unintentional, but provides that "[t]he Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional." Where, as here, there is a question whether the initial delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b). See In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989); 37 CFR 1.137(b). Here, in view of the inordinate delay (over two years) in resuming prosecution, there is a question whether the entire delay was unintentional. Petitioner should note that the issue is not whether some of the delay was unintentional by any party; rather, the issue is whether the entire delay has been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional.

The question under 37 CFR 1.137(b) for period (1) is whether the delay on the part of the party having the right or authority to reply to avoid abandonment (or not reply) was unintentional. Accordingly, any renewed petition must clearly identify the party having the right to reply to avoid abandonment on November 19, 2004, the date the Office received the partial reply and four month extension of time. That party, in turn, must explain what effort(s) was made to provide a complete reply to the outstanding

Office action and further, why a complete reply was not timely filed. If no effort was made to further reply, then that party must explain why the delay in this application does not result from a deliberate course of action (or inaction). Likewise, as the record reflects that Western Digital Technologies, Inc. (hereafter WDT, Inc.), was, and still is, responsible for prosecuting this application, then WDT, Inc. should explain why this application became abandoned while it was under their control and what efforts WDT, Inc. made to further reply of itself and with whom this matter was discussed outside of WDT, Inc. Copies of any correspondence relating to the filing, or to not filing a further reply to the outstanding Office action are required from responsible person(s), WDT, Inc., and whoever else was involved with this application at the time of abandonment. Statements are required from any and all persons then at WDT, Inc., and the responsible person(s) having firsthand knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the lack of the submission of a complete reply to the outstanding Office action. As the courts have made clear, it is pointless for the USPTO to revive a long abandoned application without an adequate showing that the delay did not result from a deliberate course of action. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005); Lumenyte Int'l Corp. v. Cable Lite Corp., Nos. 96-1011, 96-1077, 1996 U.S. App. LEXIS 16400, 1996 WL 383927 (Fed. Cir. July 9, 1996) (unpublished) (patents held unenforceable due to a finding of inequitable conduct in submitting an inappropriate statement that the abandonment was unintentional).

As to Period (2):

Likewise, where the applicant deliberately chooses not to seek or persist in seeking the revival of an abandoned application, or where the applicant deliberately chooses to delay seeking the revival of an abandoned application, the resulting delay in seeking revival of the abandoned application cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). See MPEP 711.03(c).

The language of both 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b) are clear and unambiguous, and furthermore, without qualification. That is, the delay in filing the reply during prosecution, as well as in filing the petition seeking revival, must have been, without qualification, "unintentional" for the reply to now be

accepted on petition. The Office requires that the entire delay be at least unintentional as a prerequisite to revival of an abandoned application to prevent abuse and injury to the public. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 771 ("[i]n order to prevent abuse and injury to the public the Commissioner . . . could require applicants to act promptly after becoming aware of the abandonment"). The December 1997 change to 37 CFR 1.137 did not create any new right to overcome an intentional delay in seeking revival, or in renewing an attempt at seeking revival, of an abandoned application. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53160 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 87 (October 21, 1997), which clearly stated clear that any protracted delay (here, over two years) could trigger, as here, a request for additional information. As the courts have since made clear, a protracted delay in seeking revival, as here, requires a petitioner's detailed explanation seeking to excuse the delay as opposed to USPTO acceptance of a general allegation of unintentional delay. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633, at 1637-8 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005) at *21-*23. Statements are required from any and all persons then at WDT, Inc. and the responsible person(s) having firsthand knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the protracted delay, after the abandonment date, in seeking revival.

Any renewed petition may be addressed as follows:

By Mail: Mail Stop PETITION
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By hand: U. S. Patent and Trademark Office
Customer Service Window, Mail Stop Petitions
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

The centralized facsimile number is (571) 273-8300.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3218.



Frances Hicks

Petitions Examiner
Office of Petitions